


I n d i v i d u a l D e v e l o p m e n t P l a n n i n g

*The Foundation of a
Career Partnership*

Employee Guide



**Office of Training and Human Resource Development
1994**

Forward

The Department of Energy faces mission and management challenges that call for a new responsiveness to employee development. Decreasing resources and rightsizing the organization are just two of the challenges mandating that the human resources of the Department be developed and managed to meet the increasing workload expectations. Individual development plans are essential for ensuring that the training and development activities of employees are strategically aligned with the mission of the Department. And, individual development plans form the foundation of a career partnership.

This guide is designed to lead you through the individual development planning process. While a sample individual development plan form is provided in this guide, it is not intended to supersede any of the forms in use throughout the Department. Check with your Training Coordinator for the appropriate form for your use.

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***What is an
Individual
Development
Plan?***

An individual development plan (IDP) is the foundation of your career partnership with your supervisor. It is a written schedule or plan designed to meet your particular goals for development. IDPs are a method of systematically planning training and experience in order to develop the specific competencies you may need. It is a framework to identify strengths and development needs and to align these with the organization's goals for success. It is an individually-tailored action plan that outlines developmental objectives with the activities to achieve those objectives. Rather than haphazardly chancing time and money on what may or may not be a useful learning experience, the IDP gives both you and your supervisor the opportunity to set objectives that will ensure your progress in your employment and ensure that the Department realizes the fullest potential of each employee. The IDP process will help plan those experiences that will support these objectives.

The IDP is realistic because the process includes both the supervisor's and the employee's perspective, the employee's goals are considered if they are feasible in the organization. The employee has a chance to get information and feedback so that goals can be set that are reasonably achievable.

IDPs will be used to plan training and related developmental experiences (details, special projects, on-the-job training, etc.) They can change from year to year, and their primary purpose is to help employees - to help them set up reasonable goals, assess their particular strengths, and chart where they can best contribute and grow. An effective IDP not only addresses how an organization can assist an individual in development, but it also addresses activities of self-development undertaken by the individual on their own time and at their own expense.

An IDP is not a binding contract. While every effort should be made by both you and your supervisor to adhere to the plan, circumstances sometimes arise that require modifying the IDP. Completing an IDP does not imply that you will be promoted; it is intended to facilitate your growth in your current position while preparing you for future challenges which may or may not include a promotion.

This guide was prepared to explain IDPs: how to prepare them, how to use them, and what you can expect from them.

***Individual
Development
Planning
Process
Overview***

The IDP is a tool for employees to chart and plan their own individual development over the next several years and the IDP process involves the employee and the employee's supervisor. This process is a chance for the supervisor to find out about the employees' goals and how they see themselves in the organization. It also implies a responsibility on the supervisor's part. In order for an employee to get a true picture of career possibilities, it is necessary for the supervisor to provide information on the organization's short-and long-term plans, its staffing needs, its need for particular skills, and what career ladders exist or are planned. It is also the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the training employees receive is consistent with the goals and objectives of your organization.

The IDP Process is a seven-step process that involves continuous two-way communications between the employee and his or her supervisor.

Step One: Identify Short-Range and Long-Range Career Goals

Step Two: Identify Site-Required and Position-Required Training

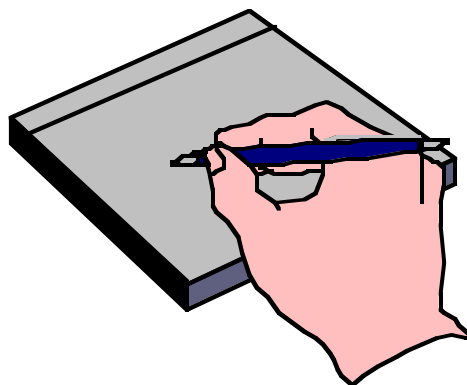
Step Three: Determine Development Opportunities and Objectives

Step Four: Explore Development Options and Select Activities

Step Five: Hold Development Discussion with Supervisor

Step Six: Take Action

Step Seven: Monitor Progress



***Step One:
Identify
Short-Range
and
Long-Range
Career
Goals***

Identifying career goals is a very personal decision. While some people have clear goals identified, not all people do. If you need more guidance on developing your career goals, there are a number of good books available on the subject of career management. Check your local library and/or bookstore. If your organization has a career resource center, they will be able to provide assistance and counseling. Check with your training office for additional resources available in your organization.

Defining a Goal

A goal is something pertinent to your work and your career that you see as worthwhile to strive for - either the improvement or mastery of some skill in your current job, some new responsibilities in your current job, or the attainment of some other position.

Goals should be realistic and attainable; your goals should imply some work and challenge, but they should not be set on something so high that getting it will be almost impossible. In preparing goal statements, be as specific as possible.

Factors affecting the feasibility of achieving these goals are:

1. *Your other commitments* - Your current work schedule, family, hobbies, community obligations, etc. Do not outline a program with lots of self-study and formal courses if you know you have a very heavy work schedule coming up or a lot of travel, for example.
2. *Your previous learning experiences* - Consider the types of learning experiences that were most beneficial to you. When, and under what circumstances, did you learn the most. Also consider the topics of study that you most enjoyed.
3. *Your desire to achieve the goal* - You do not need to have lofty goals. That can lead to disappointment. Strive for attainable goals.
4. *Your knowledge of the organization* - Find out about career ladders, forecasted staffing needs, expected vacancies and reorganizations, and what skills your organization will be needing. This is very important. Your supervisor may be an excellent source for this infor-

mation, but you may want to investigate other sources to get more information. Read the strategic plans of your organization, read the employee newsletters, listen to what is being said at staff meetings. All of these are sources of organizational information.

5. *Your honest self-appraisal* - Give yourself an honest self-appraisal. Use all the feedback you can get from supervisors, peers, and career counselors to develop a realistic picture of your strengths and weaknesses. Your goals should play up your strengths. If you are not particularly strong in one or more of the critical competency areas critical to reaching your goal, ask yourself, "How feasible is it to develop these skills and overcome weaknesses to the point of reaching the goal?"

6. *Resources needed* - How much time and money are necessary to achieve the goal, both personal and organizational?

If you honestly assess your own abilities, how much work is involved, the attainability of a particular goal, and you are willing to take on the work, you are much more likely to achieve the goal. Setting realistic goals may initially take some time and effort but it will be worth it in the long run. All good planning strategies start with defining the end goals.

The following are samples of short- and long-term career goals:

Short-Term Career Goals (one- to two-years)

- Become Project Leader of office contractor reform initiative.
- Increase my understanding of the budgeting process.
- Master word processing techniques.

Long-Term Career Goals (three- to five-years)

- Become expert in contracting regulations
- Become Administrative Officer
- Become Head Secretary



***Step Two:
Identify
Site-Required
and
Position-
Required
Training***

All required training must be included on your IDP. Required training may be mandated for all employees of a specific site, office, and/or profession. Required training may be technical or non-technical. To find out what training is required of your position, check with your supervisor and your training coordinator.

Examples of existing and/or upcoming DOE-wide requirements include:

Project Manager Certification requirements for MSA and MP Project Managers, as specified in DOE Order 4700.4;

Requirements for Budget Analysts and Accountants as specified by the Financial Management and Development Program; and

Requirements for technical personnel performing activities related to the management, oversight, or operation of defense nuclear facilities, as specified by the Technical Qualifications Program.

***Step Three:
Determine
Development
Opportunities
and Objectives***

Development opportunities can be defined as (1) critical job competencies that you need to develop to improve your work performance, (2) talents you have that you would like to use more and that the office needs for effective performance, and (3) competencies you need to develop to reach your short- and long-term career goals.

Critical Job Competencies

Input from your supervisor, your performance appraisals, and your position description are excellent sources for information regarding your critical job competencies. You should note that even if you earned an outstanding performance appraisal in the last rating cycle, you still need to pay attention to critical job competencies. Changing missions, decreasing resources, and restructuring require that we focus on increasing our critical job competencies.

Sample Development Opportunity

A Budget Analyst received an outstanding performance appraisal in the last rating cycle. He is aware, though, that the restructuring of the organization is going to place increased demands on his position. After discussing the situation with his supervisor, he identified that project management skills will become an increasingly critical job competency. This represents a development opportunity.

Talents

We all have talents that we bring to the job. Talents represent skill areas where we excel and that we enjoy using. If you want to develop your career by using a talent more, you need to ask yourself the following questions:

How can I use this talent more in my current job?

Who might need my skills?

If I continue to develop this talent, what opportunities might arise? What opportunities might I miss if I don't develop this talent?

How can I use this talent to the benefit of my organization?

Sample Development Opportunity

An Office Secretary enjoys teaching and has good presentation skills. She would like to use this talent and discussed it with her supervisor. Her supervisor suggested that the Office Secretary investigate the possibility of becoming a process improvement team facilitator because the office will be establishing process improvement teams in the upcoming year. This represents a development opportunity.

Competencies Needed for Short- and Long-term Career Goals

When considering the competencies you need to develop for your short- and long-term career goals, you may not have all the information you need to determine what your development opportunities may be. To find out more you should ask yourself, "Who do I know who has achieved the goals I am striving for?" This person could be an invaluable source of career information for you.

Sample Development Opportunity

A Personnel Management Specialist has identified a career change as a long-term career goal. She would like to become a Public Affairs Specialist. Because she has never worked directly in the field of public affairs, the Personnel Management Specialist contacted a Public Affairs Specialist and asked him to identify the most critical competencies necessary for his career field. Based on the information she received, along with a self-assessment, the Personnel Management Specialist determined that she needs to improve her writing skills. This represents a development opportunity.

Once the development opportunity has been identified, it needs to be translated into a development objective. This is simply the restatement of the development opportunity into an objective statement. For example, the Budget Analyst in the first example identified that project management skills will become increasingly critical as a job competency. The development objective could be stated as follows: To develop and enhance my skills as a project manager. In the second



***Step Four:
Explore
Development
Options and
Select
Activities***

example, the Office Secretary determined that she could use her talent to become a process improvement team facilitator. Her development objective could read: Develop the skills necessary to facilitate a process improvement team. And finally, the Personnel Management Specialist concluded that she needs to improve her writing skills. Her development objective could be: Improve my writing skills.

Generally, this step is easy to complete once the development opportunity has been identified.

There are many different types of development activities; formal training is only one option and many times is not the best option. The following is a list of various types of development options. It is not all-inclusive. Use your imagination.

On-the-Job Training - Structured training in which learning objectives are achieved while in the work environment and while completing work tasks.

Classroom Training - Structured formal instruction presented in a classroom environment by a qualified instructor.

Self-Study Courses - Courses that the employee completes at his or her own pace. May or may not be completed during the regular work day.

After-Hours Courses - Generally college-level courses taken outside the normal work day.

Shadowing - Opportunity for employee to observe individual who has demonstrated successful work strategies.

Discussions with Subject Matter Experts - Structured question and answer session with subject matter expert to answer employee's questions. May be used to explore career opportunities or to learn specific tasks.

Rotational Assignments - Short-term work assignments appropriate for the important skills identified in the development objective. This may be accomplished through a formal detail.

Developmental Assignments - Work assignments that challenge the employee to develop and use new competencies within the current position.

Reading - Selected books and articles to increase understanding of a specific topic.

Development of Job Aides - Development of job aides to assist in the training of other employees. Employee must first learn the task completely before he or she will be able to teach other employees.

Participation on Task Force - Short- or long-term assignment that affords the opportunity to develop new skills.

As you can see, there are many different options for developing competencies. When selecting a development activity, the following criteria may help identify the best activity for your specific needs.

Will the activity contribute to the development objective? How?

What are the direct and indirect costs associated with the activity?

Is the development activity easily available?

You should also consider the six factors for consideration listed on pages 3 and 4 when determining which development option is best for you and the organization.

Also, keep in mind that all activities must be mission related and congruent with your organization's training policy.

***Step Five:
Hold
Development
Discussion
with
Supervisor***

Preparing your IDP is the foundation of your career partnership with your supervisor. You probably will have questions for him or her throughout the process; however, once you have completed your IDP you will want to have a more formal development discussion with your supervisor. The objective of the development discussion with your supervisor is to gain support for your plan of action and to modify your IDP as necessary based on input you receive from your supervisor.

Schedule a meeting with your supervisor and explain that you would like to discuss your IDP. Try to schedule the meeting in a neutral place, such as a conference room, where neither of you will be interrupted. Plan about an hour for the meeting, but don't schedule anything right after the meeting in case it takes a little longer. Stay focused in the meeting and try to keep your supervisor focused on the task at hand - discussing your career development and agreeing on a plan of action, your IDP.

You want to make sure that you and your supervisor are in agreement regarding your critical job competencies. Without these competencies you cannot be successful in your job. While you want support for development opportunities identified relative to your talents and career goals, total agreement is not necessary for job success.

You need to be prepared to demonstrate to your supervisor why he or she should support the development activities you have identified, especially for those activities that are not related to critical job competencies. Ask yourself, "What benefit will my supervisor and the organization receive if I am supported in this development activity?"

For an effective development discussion, remember, don't become defensive. Actively listen, ask questions, clarify for understanding. Be flexible and open to new ideas. Remember, your supervisor may have a broader view of what is happening in the organization and may make suggestions that will be beneficial to you in the long run.

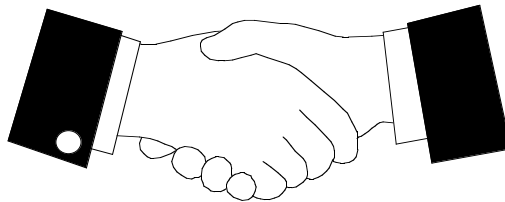
***Step Six:
Take
Action***

Once you and your supervisor agree on your IDP, you will have established the foundation for your career development partnership. Now you need to take action and complete the activities that you agreed to. If you are to take formal training, check with your Training Coordinator about enrolling in the courses. If you are to complete developmental assignments, develop your action plan. If you are to read a book and complete some self-study, follow through and locate the resources you need. It is very important that you keep the commitments you have made in your IDP. On the other hand, you may need to make adjustments. Unfortunately, sometimes unexpected workloads mean we have to delay some development activities, but try to stay on track.

***Step Seven:
Monitor
Progress***

The IDP process is an on-going, never-ending process of growth and development. And, you will need to periodically reassess where you are, where you have been, and where you want to go. You will need to assess the effectiveness of the activities you pursued to address your development opportunities. Hopefully, they achieved the your objectives. But, realistically, maybe they didn't. Maybe you learned something new only to realize you have a lot more to learn. Maybe the activities opened new doors, new paths for you to explore. So, you will need to update your IDP by beginning the process all over again.

At a minimum, you should review your IDP semi-annually.



***Frequently
Asked
Questions
About
Individual
Development
Plans***

I am interested in attending a one-day seminar I just found out about. It is not in my IDP. Can I still go?

The IDP attempts to identify all your development activities, but sometimes other options become available after you have prepared your IDP. So, the fact that the seminar is not identified on your IDP does not necessarily mean you cannot attend. After getting your supervisor's support for the seminar, check with your Training Coordinator.

I am satisfied with my current job and I am not interested in moving into any other position. What can an IDP do for me?

Because "development" does not just mean moving up or into another job, the IDP can be concerned with your growth in your current job - mastery of skills or learning different facets of the job. Employees planning to stay in their current jobs still must work at keeping skills current, remaining productive, and being successful. None of us is in a job that will look the same in two years. Requirements are constantly changing and it is critical to be current-if not ahead of the change.

Once something is on the IDP, can I change it?

Absolutely. Unexpected situations can make some planned training impossible, and things can happen that require activities that were not planned.

Is this a performance appraisal? What effect does the IDP process have on performance appraisals?

This is not a performance appraisal. The IDP focuses exclusively on the employee's growth and development. Actual performance will certainly enter into the discussion, but the IDP discussion is not a performance review. Performance appraisals and IDP discussions are two separate but related conversations. Care should be taken to keep them as such if the two discussions are held at the same time. The performance appraisal reviews the past and the IDP discussion plans for the future.

How long should my IDP be?

As a general rule, the IDP could include several development objectives, but more than three may be too much. You may have more than one development activity for each of the development objectives.